
Irish Domestic Servants, 'Biddy' and Rebellion in the American Home, 1850–1900

Andrew Urban

'Bridget'

In autumn 1871, the weekly women's magazine, *Harper's Bazar*, published an article titled simply 'Bridget'. In the article, the anonymous author surveyed recent developments in what was popularly known as the 'domestic service question'. Following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, middle-class magazines and newspapers had made the impending availability of male Chinese servants an item of frequent discussion. The anticipated migration of Chinese immigrants from California to eastern cities – and the promise of Chinese servants – captivated middle-class audiences. 'A cry goes up from the multitude of matrons in which there is a tone of desperation', explained the author of the article in *Harper's Bazar*, 'for the machine, the Chinese machine, the imitative, accurate worker, whose murmurs have been subdued through a thousand generations'.¹ The author's description suggests that American women believed the appeal of the Chinese domestic servant lay in his instinctive and essential servility. A 'machine', he did not possess a personality and was not capable of disobeying orders or challenging his employers' authority. Prentice Mulford, writing in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1873, echoed this belief. Not only did the Chinese race produce efficient servants with mechanical precision, Mulford claimed that each Chinese servant was 'neat in person, can be easily ruled, [and] does not set up an independent sovereignty in the kitchen'.²

Yet, as the title of the article in *Harper's Bazar* indicates, the purpose of the author's commentary was not to tout 'the coming of John Chinaman', as other writers did, but rather to ponder what had gone wrong with the employment of 'Bridget' – the female Irish servant – and to contemplate whether the task of transforming Irish immigrant girls into capable servants had become a lost cause. According to the author of the piece in *Harper's Bazar*, employers still possessed the ability to impart to their Irish servants civilised habits and behaviour, as long as they were willing to dedicate themselves to the arduous work that this entailed. For example, instead of lamenting the fact that Bridget did not know how to scrub floors properly, employers needed to realise that this was quite literally a foreign skill, 'since her floor at home was the hard earth'. Instead of bemoaning Bridget's deplorable culinary skills, mistresses

had an obligation to teach Bridget how to use different food products, since she was 'accustomed to such simple diet as oatmeal and buttermilk'. In addition, in the United States, where many middle-class families could only afford a single 'maid of all work' to perform domestic labour, it was unfair to expect a 'poor peasant girl just landed from a sea-voyage' to immediately perfect the many skills required of her.³

Still, the author noted that it was foolish to over-extend sympathy to Bridget and her plight. If 'added to the hard duty of repressing the unrighteous but natural impatience with ignorance, rawness, or stupidity, [she] finds that she has to contend with a shirk, a slattern, a shrew, not to speak of exceptionally worse', then the mistress 'cannot be altogether blamed for her declaration of war upon all the Bridgets that St Patrick left alive'. The article in *Harper's Bazar* concluded where it began: if Bridget resisted designs for her personal improvement, then perhaps the solution was to look towards the Chinese after all.⁴

During the 1870s, employers' frustrations with Irish domestic labour led them to propose solutions that were highly controversial. Authors with personal experience employing male Chinese servants confidently declared that the benefits of their labour outweighed any concerns they had about granting men access to their bedrooms and other intimate spaces. In order to defend such arrangements, white women argued that male Chinese servants belonged to a 'third sex' and lacked typical masculine sexual desires. 'Young ladies who have grown up with Chinese servants in the house all their lives', claimed the author of an article that was published in the *Quaker Friend's Review*, 'tell me they never regard "John" as a man'.⁵

Irish women, in the opinion of their native-born American critics, similarly defied gender roles, albeit to a less desirable end. When authors compared Irish servants to the 'celebrated bull in the china shop', as one writer for *Scribner's Monthly* did, or claimed of the Irish 'that nothing can take from the race their mission to deface and destroy, to break and to blunder', it was meant to divulge the lack of civilised grace among Irish women.⁶ Nineteenth-century authors and cartoonists frequently highlighted what they considered to be their Irish servants' crude qualities, savage disposition and masculine physique. A rebellious subject, the Irish servant was quick to resort to physical intimidation and violence in order to get her way.

Irish disorder and the American home

For much of the nineteenth century, discussions of the 'domestic service question' in the United States were inseparable from concerns about Irish immigration. Demographically, the particularities of Irish immigration to the US meant that Irish women provided the majority of servants in New York, Boston and Philadelphia prior to 1920, when their role in the occupation was gradually replaced by African American women migrating from the south. In the post-famine years between 1851 and 1921, 27 per cent of the approximately 4.5 million Irish immigrants who came to the US were females aged fifteen to twenty-four, the cohort most likely to enter into domestic service.⁷ Unmarried Irish women served as a crucial economic lifeline for family members who remained in Ireland, and it was common for Irish leaders in the US to discourage marriage among female immigrants, since it prevented them from earning wages outside the home.⁸ In the years before factory jobs were widely available to women, compared to needlework – the

other occupation readily available to women wage earners – domestic service provided higher wages and room and board.

By 1855, Irish women accounted for 74 per cent of all domestic servants in New York City. In 1900, 54 per cent of all Irish-born women in the United States still worked as domestic servants (even though immigration from other European countries had surpassed immigration from Ireland) and represented just under half of all the servants in New York and Philadelphia.⁹ As Vassar College Professor Lucy Maynard Salmon documented in her history of domestic service in the United States, which was first published in 1892, the employers she interviewed romanticised about a 'golden age' of domestic service, when they were able to hire co-religionists and native-born Americans. The predominance of Irish women as servants coincided with the creation of an urban middle class who felt superior to the domestic employees they hired.¹⁰

While the conflict between predominantly Protestant, Anglo-American employers and their Catholic, Irish servants has been well-documented, scholars have spent less time interpreting how 'Biddy', the stereotypical figure of Irish domestic labour (and the nickname for Bridget), came into existence.¹¹ This article argues that middle-class American women used the figure of Biddy, and the problems she allegedly posed, in order to align their reform efforts in the home with the broader goal of transforming Irish immigrants into useful members of society who respected Anglo-American authority and served middle-class needs.¹² The question of whether rural, Catholic Irish immigrants could be changed into respectful, obedient and civilised citizens was not solely relegated to the realm of organised politics, where nativists argued that the male figure of 'Paddy' threatened republicanism in the United States. Many Americans saw Biddy as a more immediately dangerous threat in the context of the American home, where the 'perpetual revolution' and 'domestic anarchy' of the Irish servant endangered middle-class households.

Biddy's refusal to follow orders and her frequent bouts of insubordination compromised the tranquillity and moral calm that the nineteenth-century home and the creation of a domestic space were supposed to promise. An article in *Harper's Monthly* noted to its mainly male audience that the result of Biddy's presence was that 'the master of the house returns from the cares and vexations of his day's business, seeking repose in his home, but finds only disquiet'.¹³ It was the responsibility of Anglo-American women to devise solutions on how to put Biddy in her place, in order to preserve the sanctity of the home. An author writing in *Scribner's Monthly*, for example, explicitly noted how the governance of domestic servants was a mark of a mistress's domestic talent: 'Bridget indeed is a creature of possibilities; her flowering depends much upon the quality of cultivation'.¹⁴ Middle-class women defined their own social identities, and the role that they were obliged to perform in upholding domestic values, in the context of how they defended their home from the onslaught of Irish servants.¹⁵

Scholars have described women's influence over the domestic sphere in the nineteenth century as 'paradoxical'. Their domestic roles, and confinement to the private realm of the home, meant that middle-class women embodied 'private virtue removed from national power'.¹⁶ Nonetheless, middle-class women were political actors responsible for controlling and disciplining their immigrant employees. While middle-class women expressed disgust over what they viewed as their Irish servants' political agitation against the domestic sphere, they eagerly embraced the responsibility of governing the home and quelling any domestic uprisings. A woman letter-writer explained to the

editor of the *New York Observer* that her husband had encouraged her to act as the 'Secretary of the Interior' over her servants, and that she was only to convene the 'cabinet' when 'great emergencies arose'. By performing a role analogous to a president's cabinet member – in her case one charged with overseeing the 'interior' or the home – the wife took pride in exercising authority over her Irish servants and in relieving her husband from having to govern this aspect of the family's affairs. In this role, her actions were far from symbolic.¹⁷

'Manifest domesticity', Amy Kaplan has argued, meant in the nineteenth century that 'the empire of the mother thus shares the logic of the American empire; both follow a double compulsion to conquer and domesticate the foreign, thus incorporating and controlling a threatening foreignness within the borders of the home and the nation'.¹⁸ Whether seeking to civilise their Irish servants and make them productive in catering to their needs, or attempting to replace them altogether, middle-class women were adamant in their desire to create an acceptable labour relationship in the home. Although they shared a home with their employers, Irish servants were frequently reminded of their status and place in it. Unlike the middle-class families who purportedly embodied domesticity, Irish servants provided the physical labour that, on a practical level, allowed the domestic to exist.

Finally, as the last section of this article addresses, the ways in which Irish immigrants themselves responded to attacks against Irish servants offer insights into how they thought about race, servitude and social inclusion. As David Roediger has noted, to call a white woman a servant in the middle part of the nineteenth century risked insult, since in the American south 'servant' and 'slave' were often interchangeable terms, and in the north, employers considered free blacks to be 'domestic servants' and white women to be 'help' – a point that was not lost on the Irish.¹⁹ The efforts of European immigrants to 'become white' did not occur uniformly among men and women. If, as scholars of critical whiteness have argued, Irish men were acutely conscious about the benefits of claiming whiteness – and used suffrage and other tools to this end – Irish women likewise understood what was at stake in their racialisation.²⁰ While striving to meet their employers' demands may have improved Irish women's relationships with middle-class Anglo-Americans, wilful subservience was simultaneously seen as a distinctly un-American quality and a characteristic that defined non-white populations. Irish women were forced to take up domestic service as a means of economic survival, yet they attached different meanings to the degraded status of the labour they had to undertake.

'Paddy' and 'Hibernia'

Although Anglo-Americans and their British counterparts understood their superiority to the Irish in similar ways, they defined differently the threat that the Irish posed. Unlike the American middle class, who felt that Irish domestic servants were 'pioneers in the general conquest' of Irish immigration and at the front line of cultural and social conflict, British portrayals of a dangerous race of Irish agitators and political malcontents kept Irish women and Ireland – embodied in the figure of 'Hibernia' (or 'Erin') – above the fray.²¹ 'Paddy', in particular the version of this stereotype made famous in *Punch* magazine, was not only a threat to the good governance of Ireland provided by Britain, but also to Hibernia herself, who was far safer under British rule.

British publications did employ the long-running trope of the clumsy Irish servant who unwillingly made poetry out of his or her mangling of the English language. These discourses – while racialised – were more patronising than overtly malicious, and did not represent Irish servants as an imminent threat to the British way of life. The stereotype of the Irish servant as 'light-hearted, light-headed, and light-heeled' originated with the stock character of the stage Irishman, which had been a mainstay of English theatre dating back to the sixteenth century.²² Although the character of the stage Irishman could encompass any number of occupations, Samuel Lover's play *Handy Andy*, which featured an Irish servant named Andy Rooney who 'had the most singularly ingenious knack of doing everything the wrong way', functioned to popularise further the stage Irishman as a servant.²³

The Irish servant that appeared in theatre and comic anecdotes was disproportionately male. Characters of the 'Handy Andy' type were meant to depict the Irish as buffoons and children, whose gaffes explained why they occupied a subservient role within the internal colonial structure of the Union, and to provide a humorous contrast to the decorum and seriousness that marked Anglo-Protestant civilisation. In an article titled 'Recollections of an Irish Home' in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, for example, the Anglo-Irish narrator remembered her Irish servants as enjoyable playthings and companions. Although 'no Irishman could resist the temptations of whisky', the author presented hiding the decanter from the male butler as an amusing game. She noted that 'Old Sarah', the cook, 'had a deep-seated conviction that everything not Irish was little worth consideration', a personal philosophy that she comically demonstrates when the house receives a 'hamper of game from a very exalted personage' and Sarah dismisses the food as not being up to her standard. In contrast to these humorous encounters that occur at the manor home where the author's family resides, the reader is also reminded that the author's stay in Ireland was during the time when the 'Fenian conspiracy was at its height' and that her grandfather never left the house unarmed. The Irish outside the home lurk in the dark planning violent and savage action – a different and unpleasant tomfoolery altogether.²⁴

In an article published in *Chambers's Journal* titled 'Domestic Helps and Hindrances', the Irish domestic servant displays a type of harmless childishness as well, repeatedly giving her notice only to rescind this action the next morning.²⁵ An article titled 'Humours of Irish Servants', published in 1913, mourned what the author (the Honourable Mrs Edward Lyttelton) believed to be the fact that previously entertaining and eccentric Irish servants had become 'rather dull and commonplace, and in many ways assimilated to English manners and customs'. The author offered such anecdotes from the past as the Irish servant who, upon receiving a caller, immediately forgets the name and the caller's business, only to come sobbing to the mistress 'Mebbe it was Higgins or mebbe it was Elephant; but if ye' was to kill me for it, I can't tell ye' any more nor that', as well as a cook who 'used to speak of "dissecting" the clothes that came from the wash'.²⁶

Although the character of the Irish servant existed separately from the character of the stage Irishman, the two blended together. In the widely covered trial surrounding the Tichborne Claimant, a court case involving a man who fraudulently claimed to be the heir to an aristocratic fortune, the *Derby Mercury* used the character of the stage Irishman to paint a portrait of the real-life Irish servant who was called on to testify. In the newspaper's account, 'the comic witness' was 'a thin, long-visaged

melancholy looking man, with an almost unintelligible brogue, whose drollery was heightened by it being manifestly unconscious, evidenced by the fact that his gravity was never for one moment disturbed by the roars of laughter which his testimony provoked'.²⁷

Irish servants were also a staple of the jokes that British newspapers would publish in their 'Amusements', 'Scraps' or 'Variety' sections. One joke described a male Irish servant instructed to fetch his mistress's 'new velvet mantilla' from the dressmaker and told to take a cab home afterwards in order to avoid the rain. Upon returning with the mantilla soaking wet, the servant explains to his peeved employer that he had sat 'on the box with the driver', since servants were not expected to ride inside.²⁸ In another joke, 'Biddy' interprets her mistress's order to clean up after her goldfish by taking the fish out of their tanks and scrubbing them with polish.²⁹ In a cartoon published by *Punch* in 1902, Bridget and her mistress examine a sickly pet dog, and the mistress suggests shooting the animal in order to put it out of its misery (Figure 1). Bridget disagrees, explaining that if the dog is shot and then recovers her health, 'ye'd be sorry ye'd had her kill'd!'³⁰ The common theme in these jokes is the inability of Irish servants to grasp instructions and events logically.

Although it is clear that the specific figure of Bridget or Biddy circulated on both sides of the Atlantic, in Britain the usage of this particular stereotype was not nearly as common. Nor were the British and American versions of Biddy the same. Treatments of Irish Catholic domestic servants in Ireland and Great Britain under the Union, and the servant's invariably humorous encounters with his or her Protestant employer, complemented the political discourses of the time period that sought to portray Ireland as an infant in need of British rule and civilisation. The jokes reveal ambivalence about this civilising mission, as it might detract from the entertainment value of the uniquely backward Irish.

The politicised version of Biddy that emerged in the United States, where Irish domestic labour posed a direct threat to the ability of Anglo-Americans to maintain domesticity, did not have a counterpart in Great Britain. Even though more than 50 per cent of Irish immigrant women in London entered domestic service during the middle part of the nineteenth century, they still only accounted for a small portion of the total number of servants.³¹ Irish servants appear to have been hired more regularly in Jewish households in Britain, which reflects the fact that Irish servants held a lower status than their British counterparts, and were relegated to taking jobs in Jewish homes that existed on the margins of the British middle class.³²

In other contexts, British publications subjected the Irish to far more negative forms of stereotyping and racial representation that were not aimed at producing humour. Yet, if Irish servants recognised their place in the British home and were not openly political, their stubbornness and odd behaviour were written off as quaint and amusing. Rather, it was in the arena of politics and Irish nationalism that the Irish lost their endearing quirkiness and became monsters, gorillas and inhuman foes.

In the nineteenth century, British politicians and commentators opposed to Irish Home Rule and critical of Irish men's fitness for self-government addressed the colonial situation with a barrage of images that depicted the Irish as simian, savage, prone to lose their temper, rapacious, drunk and lazy.³³ These images were embodied in the hyper-masculine Paddy character whose racialisation and transformation into his



Figure 1: J. Leighton, [untitled cartoon], *Punch*, 5 November 1902 (University of Minnesota, Wilson Library).

Punch and other British publications frequently published cartoons and jokes that highlighted the inability of the Irish to think and act logically. While meant to provoke laughs, this type of humour also supported the widely held British belief that the Irish were not fit to govern themselves.

monstrous, simian state occurred only when he was acting politically defiant.³⁴ A proliferation of these images took place in the early 1880s, when the Land League, under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, aggressively campaigned for reform in tenants' rights and Home Rule and advocated such techniques as the rent boycott, which British commentators and politicians viewed as an excuse to incite peasant violence. In addition, the Phoenix Park murders of May 1882, when a splinter group of Fenians known as the 'Invincibles' assassinated the British Secretary to Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, in a Dublin park, further fuelled accusations that the Land League was inciting the violent predisposition of the Irish.³⁵

Often, Paddy was juxtaposed with the figure of the feminine, beautiful and innocent 'Hibernia'. Used together, Paddy and Hibernia show the Irish home and nation to be in disarray. The variations on this theme in *Punch* alone are many. One cartoon in *Punch* shows Paddy wearing a hat with the word 'anarchy' written on it. He is preparing to throw a stone and is being reprimanded by a stern female figure, Britannia (in Roman regalia), who holds a sword inscribed with the words 'The Law', while with her other arm she consoles a bawling Hibernia.³⁶ Another cartoon, titled 'The Rivals', shows Hibernia accepting a bouquet of flowers symbolising the Irish Land Bill from a dapper English gentleman, while Paddy, representing the Land League, lurks behind her with a basket full of bayonets, gunpowder and dynamite.³⁷ In the 'Fenian Pest', a garishly dressed and heavily armed group of Irish agitators march past Hibernia, who, turning away from the savage male figures, asks her sister Britannia: 'what *are* we to do with these troublesome people?'³⁸ Female Hibernia and her volatile husband did not even always have to be allegorical – one *Punch* cartoon from an earlier period of Irish nationalist agitation depicts an ape-like Irish male sitting on a keg of gunpowder angrily brandishing a torch. In the background, his wife and children, portrayed with human features, mill about anxiously (Figure 2).³⁹

The interplay of Hibernia and Paddy within the pages of *Punch* provides visual cues that sought to capture Ireland's position as a dissenting member of the Union. Depictions of Hibernia as an endangered woman, as C. L. Innes argues, illustrated that 'Ireland must be rescued from the Irish, who are quintessentially undeserving of this desirable prize' and that female Ireland's stability was based on its union with the British husband, or through the protection of the British father.⁴⁰ British publications also used Hibernia to call into question gender roles among the Irish and the notion of masculine duty. With 'hot-headed' Paddy out in the fields planning revolution, it was Hibernia who had to perform the purportedly male task of supporting the family.⁴¹

During the height of the Land League's activities in 1881, the editors of *Punch* admitted to this strategy in their gendering of Ireland. The editors of *Punch* defended their usage of an 'Ogreish character' to depict Irish agitators, since 'houghing and mutilating dumb animals, maiming men and women, and shooting defenceless victims, are ugly crimes, and the embodiment of them in one single figure cannot be made too hideous or too repulsive'. At the same time, the editors pointed out that they were discerning in their criticism:

On the other hand, *Punch* has consistently and persistently kept before the public his ideal classic figure of Hibernia, graceful, gentle, tender, loving, but 'distressful', as being more or less in fear of this Ogre, her evil genius, from whose bondage may she soon be free; and then, mistress of herself, with peace and plenty in her land, blessed with wise Administration and Local Government, in happy and unbroken union with her sister, England, with a regal residence in her midst, may she see the emerald gem of the Western World set glittering in the crown of one who will be no longer a stranger.⁴²

While it is possible to take this explanation as meaning that all Irish, regardless of their gender, had to reform so that the symbolic Hibernia could be the 'mistress of herself', its message complements the numerous other images *Punch* ran where the white, human, Irish female stands next to the racialised, male Irish beast. In these instances, *Punch* depicted Paddy as mentally incapable of recognising the foolishness of his nationalist claims, and therefore unable to maintain his home or practise Home Rule.



Figure 2: John Tenniel, 'The Fenian Guy Fawkes', *Punch*, 28 December 1867, p. 263 (University of Minnesota, Wilson Library).

In 'The Fenian Guy Fawkes', an Irish woman and her children are depicted as the innocent victims of male agitation against British rule.

Irish servants in the United States – militants in the kitchen

Because authors on both sides of the Atlantic imagined affinities between the ruling classes of the United States and Great Britain, it was common practice for English authors to assess how Americans were coping with an influx of Irish immigrants in light of their own difficulties governing the Irish. In an 1880 article titled 'Romanism and the Irish Race', for example, the English historian James Anthony

Froude noted that, despite the continuous influx of Irish immigrants into the United States, 'The Irish race on the other side of the Atlantic remains as separate from the Anglo-Saxon as it is at home, and, instead of the Americans being infected with the Irish ill will toward Great Britain, they have themselves an Irish problem of their own'.⁴³

E. L. Godkin, an Irish Protestant immigrant to the United States and founder of the *Nation*, understood in exact terms how Americans perceived the Irish threat. Addressing an 1872 lecture tour by Froude, which was cut short after riots broke out in New York City in response to Froude's opposition to Home Rule, Godkin snidely stated that, 'The memory of burned steaks, of hard-boiled potatoes, of smoked milk, would have done for him what no state papers, or records, or correspondence of the illustrious dead can ever do; it had prepared the American mind to believe the worst he could say of Irish turbulence and disorder'.⁴⁴

Unlike *Punch* and other British publications, which directed their ire at the Irish male and his militant doings, American publications and commentators took direct aim at the invasion of Biddy, the female domestic servant. The demands made on Irish men in Ireland – that they accept the Union as a superior form of governance – were similar to the demands that Anglo-American women placed on their female Irish servants, who were expected to recognise their subservient status and welcome their employers' attempts to civilise them. When Irish servants in the United States resisted the terms of their employment or failed to live up to employers' expectations, Anglo-Americans mocked the claims of Irish independence as self-governing subjects. Even though Americans joined their British counterparts in trying to find humour in their situation, more dire concerns were never very far from the surface. Biddy's monopoly over domestic service in the United States meant that she was far from simply a joke. As an author in *Arthur's Home Magazine* put it, Biddy had 'reduced [families] to a mood of pitiable despair'.⁴⁵

An 1884 cartoon by Frederick Opper in the American magazine *Puck* gave visual form to the insolence of Irish servants. Titled 'Our Self-Made "Cooks" – from Paupers to Potentates', the cartoon portrayed the simianised figure of Biddy in two panels. In the first she is in Ireland, wearing rags and pleading with a bailiff not to evict her, while nearby an emaciated child sleeps on the floor. In the second, dressed in middle-class finery she is serving tea to an Irish-American policeman, reading a magazine on the latest fashions and ordering her employer, who has interrupted her socialising, to leave the room. On the wall of the room that Biddy has claimed as her own there is a portrait of St Patrick, a visual reference to Biddy's Catholicism and its entrance into Protestant homes. The cartoon's caption notes: 'They are Evicted in the Old Country . . . But in America They Do All the Evicting Themselves' (Figure 3).⁴⁶

There was more at work than merely dressing Paddy in a skirt to make him into Biddy.⁴⁷ Biddy, while bearing many of the same traits that British and American commentators applied to Paddy, was a mainstay of the middle-class American home. As a result, the Irish disorder and anarchy she represented directly endangered the American family and, in the minds of her employers, necessitated specific actions. When American magazines depicted Biddy as a masculine figure capable of violence and bullying, it was not simply to show that the Irish race lacked gender distinctions. Biddy's masculine aggression also signified her distance from the refined, civilised women who employed her and were responsible for her supervision.



Figure 3: Frederick Opper, 'Our Self-Made "Cooks" – from Paupers to Potentates', *Puck*, 30 January 1884, back cover (Michigan State University Museum, Virtual Exhibition).

Unlike images of Irish women that appeared in British publications, American cartoonists did not hesitate to depict Biddy as a direct threat to the social order of the American home.

Anglo-Americans portrayed Irish domestic servants as both immediate threats to order in the home and, on the other hand, colonial subjects who by immigration had arrived on the doorstep of Protestant America. Harriet Spofford, the novelist and author of advice books on household management, would assert in 1881, that 'the young Irish girl comes to us as plastic as any clay in all the world. She is fresh, emotional, strong, willing, full of energy that sent her three thousand miles across the water, and so totally ignorant of any other civilised ways than ours that she is completely ready to be moulded to our wish'.⁴⁸ An 1874 article in the *New York Times*, employing the same language of colonial duty, bluntly noted: 'the Irish peasantry makes capital servants, but they are to be treated, not as equals, nor again as slaves or animals, but rather as children'.⁴⁹

Mistresses posited themselves as possessing ultimate responsibility over the character of their servants, since the servants were incapable of reforming themselves. An article in the *Happy Home and Parlor Magazine*, for example, encouraged readers to look to the Bible for lessons on how to treat their servants and, as their Christian duty, to provide guidance to those they employed. While Abraham 'had no domestics from Ireland', the article pointed out that he employed servants from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Syria, and ruled over them judiciously despite their 'peculiarities'.⁵⁰ Rather than yielding authority to rebellious servants within the home, mistresses had to rule more effectively. In the 1850s in New York City, Protestant missionaries established the Five Points Christian Home for Female Servants especially for this purpose, as a home catering to former servants who had been dismissed. The Five Points

Christian Home stated that one of its primary duties was to compete with Catholic priests for influence over Irish servants, and to use education in the Protestant religion to create a 'new relation and sense of responsibility' between employers and employees.⁵¹

When authors articulated the problems that Irish servants posed, they described certain tendencies that were deemed quintessentially Irish in the literature of the time. Bidy was a force of destruction. An article in *Scribner's Monthly* on what type of glassware to purchase described, for example, how the previous set the author had owned was made a 'total wreck by the vandal hands of irrepressible Bridget'.⁵² When not destroying her employers' goods, Bidy was attempting to steal them. Magazines often portrayed Bidy as a petty thief who was in awe of the affluence surrounding her and unable to resist the temptation of her mistress's goods. Authors complained that Bidy saw no problem in inviting her myriad Irish cousins to visit her employer's home, and that it was common for her to feed 'hearty company at the expense of their larders'.⁵³ The extension of such hospitality disrupted the notion that mistresses and masters controlled their own homes.

Still, the threat posed by Bidy's inflated sense of status and generosity with her employer's possessions paled in comparison to the threat of violence that she brought into the American home. In the minds of her employers, Bidy's temper and her refusal to accept reprimands for her misdoings was her greatest fault; she would not acknowledge that being 'born and bred in a mud-hovel . . . she can know nothing of the simplest elements of civilized life'. Had Bidy merely been incompetent, then supervision and training could ameliorate her condition. Yet Bidy reacted with fury to even the slightest of criticisms. 'Her mistress would as soon stir up a female tiger as arouse her anger. Her strong arm and voluble tongue keep the most tyrannical housekeeper in such awe as to save her from all invasions of her prescriptive rights'.⁵⁴ In this context, rights take on an ironic meaning that closely parallels caricatures of Irish men attempting to govern in the public sphere. An article in *Putman's Magazine* titled 'Princess Bidy' noted that Bidy was 'a more disquieting and unendurable ruler' than even the most 'tyrannical' of working men's unions and equally unfit to exercise such power. Accordingly, American employers had to police their servants closely and become minutely familiar with what they were doing. As the author of the article in *Putman's* proclaimed: 'Know housework and cooking, Madam. Then you can issue your Declaration of Independence against your tyrant'.⁵⁵

A story published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, 'The Revolt in the Kitchen', blamed the intelligence offices that were responsible for placing servants for being complicit in Bidy's attempt to seize power. The intelligence office 'represents, in Bidy-dom, all the power of the State, and is moreover the Temple of Liberty. The custom of other places is here reversed, and the servant is the mistress. She sits enthroned, waiting to receive the homage of dependent and tributary housekeepers'. Clearly, employers saw the intelligence office as an institution that protected Bidy and allowed her to dictate the terms of her employment, a clear usurpation of the way power was supposed to be structured. Again, the solution the author of the story presents is greater discipline. Circumventing the intelligence office, the story's narrator designs a system where she hires young Irish girls directly and subjects them to her own training programme, which earns her the praise of her husband for being a 'sister of charity' and a successful 'domestic missionary'.⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, cartoons were highly effective in visualising employers' concerns about their Irish servants, especially when it came to capturing the threat of violence. The magazine *Puck*, which was closely modelled in its layout and editorial tone on *Punch*, used vivid imagery and depictions of simianised Irish domestic servants to conflate the dangers of Irish independence and home rule with the dangers of Irish control over the American kitchen.⁵⁷ On 9 May 1883, Frederick Opper's drawing of an Irish domestic servant graced the cover of *Puck*. In the cartoon, Biddy has assumed the apelike countenance usually associated with male Irish radicalism and Paddy. Standing over a broken dish, she is shaking her fist threateningly and looming over her slim and pleading employer, while the accompanying caption reads 'The Irish Declaration of Independence That We Are All Familiar With' (Figure 4).⁵⁸ An article accompanying the cartoon explained that the image had been inspired by the Irish Convention, a meeting of Irish nationalists that was taking place in Philadelphia, and the platforms for Irish independence that the participants had passed. In *Puck*'s opinion:

The Irish declaration of independence has been read in our kitchens, many and many a time, to frightened housewives, and the fruits of that declaration are to be seen in thousands of ill-cooked meals on ill-served tables, in unswept rooms and unmade beds, in dirt, confusion, insubordination and general disorder, taking the sweetness out of life.⁵⁹

Biddy's rebellious tendencies were not only figurative. Irish domestics were also displayed as directly financing Irish revolutionary activities back home. In Opper's 'The Goose That Lays the Golden Eggs', Biddy appears as a distorted, hunched-over goose, while the nationalist politician Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa feeds her promissory notes (including one labelled 'Blarney') so that she can then lay eggs that bear the description 'Contributions from Irish Servant Girls'.⁶⁰ Another Opper cartoon shows simianised Irish domestic servants queuing in line to hand over their wages to purchase dynamite and to finance an 'Irish regiment to crush the British'.⁶¹ The *Times* echoed this theme through the dispatches of its foreign correspondents in the United States who, in updating readers on the various visits made by Irish politicians and on Irish nationalist activity abroad, invariably commented how those involved sought to once again tap the coffers of New York's and Boston's servant girls.⁶² The political struggles of the domestic space that pitted Irish Catholic employees against Anglo-American Protestant employers easily became conflated with the political struggles of the Irish people against British rule.

Feudalism or discomfort? Looking abroad for help

In the midst of the domestic service crisis perpetuated by what Anglo-American employers believed to be the intransigence and inexperience of Biddy, journalists and observers of the domestic situation looked toward Great Britain for advice on how to cultivate and manage a proper class of servants. American magazines and journals regularly referenced and even published accounts on the British (or more typically, English) system of domestic service, arguing that Britain's rigid class system and the ability of British families to hire servants from their own country allowed the profession to operate more smoothly there. Symbolically, England factored into American notions of domesticity since, as one author writing in the *Home Journal* put it, England was 'the Palestine of the Home'.⁶³ The birthplace of sophisticated class-consciousness and



Figure 4: Frederick Oppen, 'The Irish Declaration of Independence', *Puck*, 9 May 1883, cover (University of Minnesota, Wilson Library).

Oppen's 1883 cartoon, 'The Irish Declaration of Independence', emphasises Biddy's masculine physicality and her willingness to resort to violence when confronted by her employer.

colonial rule, England provided a natural source of comparison. In looking abroad for advice and guidance on how best to manage domestic servants, Americans also defined the unique problems that the occupation raised in the United States.

American authors argued that, because English masters and servants possessed a clear sense of social class, this meant that they also understood – either implicitly or explicitly – that each had a mutual obligation to the other. For example, *Godey's*

Lady's Book promoted its reprint of an article that appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1862, by touting British mastery of the 'art' of how to run a home. The article from the *Edinburgh Review* argued that, by granting their servants both obligations and, if they fulfilled them, privileges, British employers had decreased friction in the home. Such efforts had also benefitted society more broadly by elevating working-class men and women from the status of 'pauperism and raggedness' into a productive and disciplined labour force.⁶⁴ For an American audience, this was an important lesson. While it was tempting for housewives to lose their tempers and verbally abuse their Irish servants, the British had shown that rewarding employees for doing things correctly produced a better result.

Instructions on how to be a better employer could be quite specific. In the *Galaxy*, Albert Rhodes, who frequently contributed articles on European manners and worked as an American consul in England, noted that, in the 'representative' English household, 'a sense of duty was the leading trait, which showed itself in taking care of the poor, providing instruction to the needy young, contributing to different charitable societies, subscribing for religious journals and magazines, [and] sending tracts and missionaries to the heathens'. Rhodes believed that the cultivation of these virtues among members of the English middle and upper classes translated naturally into knowledge of how to teach and govern servants. Rhodes specifically praised an English employer who had taken on a 'person in the humbler walks of life' as a boy and, through close supervision and education guided the servant's progression to the rank of butler.⁶⁵

While acknowledging the merits of the English system, other authors felt that it had less to do with training and more to do with tradition. Comparing the system of domestic service in the United States to that of England, the *New York Times* asserted that, 'in England, where domestic service is most complete and easy . . . servants often belong to families of servants, with all the habits, training and long practice of serving-people'. Unable to marshal a comparable pool of servants from a servant class, the American mistress had to cope with Irish immigrants bereft of such knowledge and equally unskilled in taking care of themselves:

They have had no experience in nice housework, no habits of cleanliness or economy – for the lowest laboring class is never saving – nor even an education often in the simplest kinds of cooking . . . The consequence is that each house is, at some time or other, a kind of philanthropic 'Servants' Institute', where a blundering, slovenly, strong-armed maiden is educated into a neat, handy, serviceable house-helper.⁶⁶

The perception that the British kept their best servants at home and left Americans to fend with the Irish was not isolated to the *New York Times*. An article in *Appleton's Journal* noted with sarcasm that, while the English jealously guarded their dutiful and faithful servants, the British government had no problem sending abroad 'raw material from the sister isle which smashes our favorite crockery and spoils Nature's choicest gifts in attempting to cook them'.⁶⁷

At the same time that eastern women openly proclaimed their wish to import and hire Chinese servants from California, English servants were also considered as a possible replacement for Biddy. In 1870, an article in *Old and New* by the Reverend John Williams featured the services of Elihn Burrirt of Birmingham, England, who was already engaged in the business of arranging for English girls to travel to Canada to work as domestic servants there.⁶⁸ Ultimately, Williams claimed to have passed along word of Burrirt's services to various friends, which resulted in twenty-eight English

girls being brought over to work as servants in towns and cities in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. As Williams reported satisfactorily, all of the servants were 'Protestants' and 'not one yet has arrived who would think it beneath her dignity to clean a pair of shoes if that was required of her'.⁶⁹ In the same way that they praised Chinese servants, middle-class authors similarly promoted English servants' obedience and their willingness to perform the subservient tasks that domestic work demanded.⁷⁰

The reliance of the American middle class on immigrant domestic workers exposed one of the occupation's fundamental paradoxes. Although authors blamed Irish immigrants' predominance in domestic service as one of the main reasons that paid domestic work had acquired such a lowly status, others argued that in a republican society like the United States, domestic work, and the servitude it implied, would always be stigmatised. An author writing in *Every Saturday* argued in 1869 that, since English servants were superior to their American counterparts, 'any American who values his comfort more than his democracy would do well to exchange countries for this reason alone'. After pondering whether 'comfort' was worth sacrificing the egalitarianism and social mobility of American democracy, the author chose democracy as the better option. 'It is not pleasant to think of thousands of young men and women who grow up as servants in private houses with no ambition' as was the case in England he concluded, whereas in the United States, 'a coachman may win his way into Congress, and a servant-girl may marry a future President. If we must have either discomfort or feudalism, let us choose discomfort'.⁷¹ While the author did not specify whether it was an Irish coachman and an Irish servant who could hypothetically elevate their social positions in such a fashion, given that by 1869 most American-born women avoided service altogether, seemingly this would have been implied. Arguments about the degraded status of service acknowledged that Anglo-American efforts to assimilate Irish immigrants ran counter to the wish to cultivate a permanent class of servants, as was the case in Britain. The author of the *Harper's Bazar* article on 'Bridget' made a similar point. As she argued, while English 'tyranny' was largely to be blamed for the Irish servant's backward condition, such a condition did not have to be a permanent feature, since Americans had also escaped English rule and the resulting personal degradation.⁷²

Anglo-Americans might expect to be able to hire Irish girls as servants, yet it led to conflict to assume that the Irish belonged immutably to a servant class. 'In coming here [Irish immigrants] find themselves in a position which even those who preach most against Bridget consider degrading', Godkin wrote in the *Nation*, and 'which every native American will almost sooner starve than fill, which both our politics and our literature do everything to depreciate, and from which nearly all Americans hold it to be the duty of either man or woman to escape at the earliest possible moment'.⁷³ English observers came to a similar conclusion about domestic service in the United States. A columnist for the *Liverpool Mercury* commented that Americans 'can hire a newly-imported Irish girl for a "help"; but, before she has quite learned the new ways of the land to which she has come, she imbibes something from the air she breathes, and becomes as independent as a native-born American, and, so, unfitted for domestic service'.⁷⁴ The value placed on personal independence in the United States, commentators recognised, undermined the servile behaviour that employers expected and demanded from their servants.

The noble Irish girl – exiled in America

Confronted by attacks on Biddy's character, and recognising domestic service's status in the United States, Irish and Irish-American authors responded by portraying domestic service as a necessary form of economic sacrifice that required Irish women to endure frequent harassment. Although Anglo-Americans may have succeeded in creating the stereotype of Biddy in order to capture their disdain for Irish domestic labour, the Irish community refused to accept such portrayals as accurate.

In Hugh Quigley's *The Cross and the Shamrock*, for example, the Protestant home and its surrounding community appears as a force of seduction where religious conversion is equated with rape. The Protestant home in Quigley's depiction bears little resemblance to the moral sanctuary that Anglo-American authors presented. Written for the Irish in the United States 'continually subjected to a most trying ordeal of temptation and persecution on account of their religion', *The Cross and the Shamrock* includes a dramatic scene where a Presbyterian minister accosts Bridget, an Irish domestic servant. After commenting on Bridget's 'purty curls' and 'beautiful teeth', and how surely she makes her mistress jealous, the minister proceeds to caress Bridget while urging her to become a 'good Christian'. It is not until a fellow Catholic, a young Irish man, shows up and confronts the minister, that Bridget is able to escape this harassment.⁷⁵

In the chapter of John Francis Maguire's account of Irish life in the United States dedicated to female Irish immigrants, he shares an anecdote about Kate, an Irish servant working in a Protestant household in an unnamed American city. The local preacher frequently visits the home where Kate works, generically calling her Bridget and mocking her Catholicism. While Kate typically responds to the preacher's patronising humour with patience and humility, when the preacher tells Kate in front of a dinner party that he will pay her whatever 'Father Pat' is asking for absolution, Kate can no longer control her temper. 'She flung the hot steaming liquid', a tureen of pea soup, Maguire gleefully recalls, 'over the face, neck, [and] breast'.⁷⁶ Maguire's celebration of Kate's response shows the violence of the Irish servant in a completely different light. The preacher's incessant verbal abuse and his mockery of the sacred rituals of Catholicism justify Kate's response.

Irish and Irish-American commentators regularly deployed servants as the foremost symbol of Ireland's suffering and (female) Ireland's ability to maintain a Catholic dignity throughout its privations. Mary Sadlier, an Irish immigrant author, began her 1861 novel *Bessy Conway* with the assertion that 'perhaps in the vast extent of the civilised world, there is no class more exposed to evil influences than the Irish Catholic girls who earn a precarious living at service in America'.⁷⁷ In the novel, after initially being harassed by an employer who wishes to convert Bessy to Protestantism, Bessy finally quits and is 'blessed' in that she is able to find refuge and a fair-paying job in an American Catholic home.

Because the female Irish emigrant was supposed to be a singularly humble and dutiful figure, the Irish Catholic establishment reproved Irish servants who spent their money on themselves. In this regard, the Catholic Church and the Protestant middle class found common ground in the belief that a domestic servant should not concern herself with personal vanity. Mary Frances Cusack, better known as the Nun of Kenmare, lectured in *Advice to Irish Girls in America* that, if the servant 'wishes to be rich

that she may buy fine clothes, which are not suitable to her station in life . . . then she is doing very wrong, and is putting herself in danger both in this world and the next'.⁷⁸ Cusack, conscious that poverty, the opposite of excess, might also be seen as a fault of the Irish servant girl, included tips and suggestions on cleanliness and hygiene, as well as advice on how to be industrious and diligent. Irish Catholic authors urged servants, who relied on Protestant wages, to look beyond the 'faults or imperfections of your employers; see only Jesus, your Master and your best Friend, shining through them'.⁷⁹

It is also evident that the Irish Catholic community interpreted the rural backgrounds and physicality of female Irish immigrants in a completely different light than their Protestant American counterparts. In an account produced by the Catholic Sisters of Mercy, for example, physical strength is depicted as a virtue for Irish women who were required to perform demanding labour in order to earn a living, and rural simplicity a benefit that kept the Irish singularly focused. Describing Hanna Flynn, an Irish immigrant working as a servant in New York, the Sisters of Mercy noted that she was 'a woman of masculine strength and endurance' whose 'utmost limit of her travel was her crowded parish chapel'. Flynn was illiterate and the 'alphabet was to her as the hieroglyphics of Egypt'. Nonetheless, Hanna Flynn 'was a heroine. She knew her prayers, she honored her parents, she loved God in her own simple, faithful way; she was honest, upright, truthful, laborious and capable of self-sacrifice'.⁸⁰

Strategically, middle-class Irish-American publications like *Donahoe's Magazine* welcomed and even solicited the praises of Protestant Americans who would speak on behalf of the hard work of Irish immigrant girls. Patrick Donahoe, the founder of the magazine and the wealthy publisher of the *Boston Pilot*, asked that Harriet Beecher Stowe write an article extolling Irish servant girls in order to combat the criticism they received. In the resulting article, titled 'Ireland's Daughters in their New Homes', Stowe claimed that she had 'always maintained that the very best, the safest, the most respectable, and (taking all things into account) the most really desirable situation for a working-woman was that of a family domestic'.⁸¹ She added, 'I know an eminent clergyman of Boston who has often been heard to say that the claim to saintship of some of the Irish nurses who have been helpers in his family went beyond that of many saints in the calendar'.⁸² If work in the American home was portrayed as allowing Irish women to display a type of saintly benevolence then Irish leaders were not to oppose such an arrangement.

Conclusion

By the 1890s, the direct association that linked Irish women with domestic service in the United States had begun to fade and lose its vitriolic edge. From roughly 1910 onwards, African American migrants from the south increasingly took over domestic work in north-eastern cities such as Philadelphia and New York. The female children of Irish immigrants followed the lead of other white, native-born Americans and chose to work instead in factories or in the white collar sector as secretaries and teachers.⁸³ Images and representations of the insolent and dangerous Biddy gave way to more gentle chiding that acknowledged what scholars of 'critical whiteness' have argued came with the more complete incorporation of the Irish into the white race, when they were no longer perceived to be dangerously different.⁸⁴ Towards the turn of the century, even *Puck* softened its views on the Irish and what their race was able to achieve, depicting in the

place of simian savages successful and human Irish politicians and businessmen with refined wives, often consciously trying to distance themselves from their more humble pasts.⁸⁵ During the first decade of the twentieth century, Irish-American protesters were successful in halting productions of the theatrical performance 'The Irish Servant Girls', a long-running satirical show put on by the Russell brothers, in which they wore women's clothing in order to depict a masculine and blundering version of Biddy. In 1907, near riots by Irish-American audience members in Manhattan and Brooklyn forced the Russell brothers to cancel performances.⁸⁶

Looking at the history of Biddy and the particular stereotypes Anglo-American women used to represent Irish domestic labour, it is important to recognise that employers did not construct the figure of Biddy in a generic fashion. The Irish were not the only immigrant or minority racial group providing servants in the nineteenth century. Typically, however, newspaper and magazine articles on domestic service presented Biddy in an unfavourable light in comparisons with her racialised counterparts. In contrast to the racially docile and emasculated male Chinese servant, or the doting figure of 'Mammy' who, as Patricia Morton notes, was almost always depicted as being unwaveringly loyal to her white family, detractors portrayed Biddy as being volatile and disobedient by nature.⁸⁷

In exploring the role that women photographers played in creating sentimental portraits of domestic scenes in the post-Civil War south, Laura Wexler has argued that black domestic servants were a common fixture, and that the staging of such photographs 'became desirable for former slaveholding families to undertake in order to maintain domestic composure after the legal cessation of the American slave system'.⁸⁸ In the decades prior to 1890, it is hard to imagine Biddy signifying domestic composure and tranquillity. An article titled 'Biddy Dethroned' that appeared in *Putnam's Magazine* in 1870, celebrated the 'incoming of the Chinese' by explaining that 'never till our homes cease to be workshops chafed by the friction of endless toil, will they rise perfectly to their true end of nurseries of a Christian nation'.⁸⁹ While not all Anglo-American employers were ready (or able) to 'dethrone' Biddy and dismiss their Irish servants outright, almost all middle-class mistresses shared in the consensus that the Irish had to be reformed and, given the Irish disposition, this would be no easy accomplishment. When Anglo-Americans on the east coast blindly praised the labour of Chinese men and argued (often without ever having encountered an actual Chinese servant) that the Chinese race was naturally servile and never failed to provide loyal workers, it is safe to say that arguments about the problems posed by Irish labour almost inevitably followed.

By acting out against their employers and frustrating Anglo-American employers' attempts at reform, Irish servants demonstrated that they were conscious of the profession's degraded status in the United States. Hanna Flynn, discussed earlier, immigrated to the US in 1859 from Ireland in order to support her family and received training as a domestic servant at the House of Mercy on Houston Street in New York City. Flynn, upon receiving a position in an American home, sent her earnings to her brother and sister still in Ireland, "'slaving out' her life" . . . among strange people, in strange places, for those she loved so well'.⁹⁰ Irish servants understood the social implications of doing domestic work even as they relied on the wages it provided. Irish immigrants realised that the racial groups believed to supply the 'best' servants occupied a position at the bottom of the nation's social and racial hierarchy for this very reason. When

authors noted that employers would not treat native-born American girls in the same manner they treated their Irish servants, they too acknowledged that the Irish were not to be treated like the Chinese, who could allegedly tolerate any order.

Horatio Seymour, the former governor of New York and the Democratic nominee for the presidency in 1868, commented in the *New York Times* that 'I have no doubt the Chinese have useful qualities. They are said to be good servants, ready to do the work of men or women, but they have not the traits which will build on this Continent a great and high-toned power'.⁹¹ Servility may have made Chinese immigrants ideal for domestic labour, but it excluded them from being participants in nation-building. In this regard, the author and playwright Brett Harte hoped that the presence of Chinese immigrants in San Francisco would inspire the Irish to improve as a race. In an 1867 dispatch to the *Springfield Republican*, he noted that:

As servants [the Chinese] are quick-witted, patient, obedient and faithful, and the old prerogatives of Bridget and Norah in the domestic circle are seriously threatened by the advent of these quiet, clean, and orderly male chambermaids and cooks. That John Chinaman will eventually supplant Bridget and Patrick in menial occupations seems to be a settled fact. I see nothing for Bridget and Patrick to do except to progress.⁹²

As Harte implies, rather than compete with the Chinese immigrants for menial jobs, Irish immigrants' progress could be defined by distancing themselves from degraded labour altogether.

By creating a public discourse about why Bidy was such a problematic employee, Anglo-American women placed themselves at the forefront of the debates surrounding immigration and assimilation, and how immigrants could be exploited to fit American labour needs. As policy makers responsible for maintaining both the concept of domesticity and the management of domestic labour, Anglo-American women had to reign in and control Irish disorder and the threat it posed to the home, or design schemes to replace Bidy altogether.

Notes

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1. 'Bridget', *Harper's Bazar* 4, 11 November 1871, p. 706. It was not until 1929 that the magazine changed the spelling of its name to its contemporary form, *Harper's Bazaar*.
2. Prentice Mulford, 'Glimpses of John Chinaman', *Lippincott's Magazine* 11 (11 February 1873), p. 224. The mass migration of Chinese immigrants from California to the east that many authors anticipated never occurred. Although a small number of Chinese servants were employed in New York in the early 1880s, they remained numerically insignificant when compared to the population of Irish servants. On Chinese domestic servants and the imagined labour solution they provided, see Andrew Urban, 'An Intimate World: Race, Migration, and Chinese and Irish Domestic Servants in the United States, 1850–1920' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Minnesota, 2009), pp. 99–149.
3. 'Bridget', p. 706.
4. 'Bridget', p. 706.
5. 'California', *Friend's Review* 33 (31 January 1880), p. 386. On the historic process by which Chinese men were stripped and denied a male and masculine identity, see David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

6. 'Glassware and Glass-Houses', *Scribner's Monthly* 14 (June 1877), p. 260; 'How to Sweep a Room', *Scribner's Monthly* 9 (November 1874), p. 119.
7. See Table 12, Appendix, in Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 581.
8. Maureen Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830–1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 64–7.
9. Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 74–94; on the percentage of Irish immigrants entering domestic service, see Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, p. 56; Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, pp. 500–01.
10. Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (New York: Macmillan, 1901), pp. 54–62.
11. See e.g., Faye Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981). As Margaret Lynch-Brennan notes, American employers also used 'Kate', 'Katy', 'Maggie' and 'Peggy' as generic nicknames for Irish servants, although never to the same degree that they used Biddy and Bridget. Margaret Lynch-Brennan, 'Ubiquitous Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840–1930', in J. J. Lee and Marion R. Casey (eds), *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2006), p. 333.
12. The prefix Anglo references a belief among members of the middle class who could afford to hire servants that the American nation possessed a Protestant identity that could be traced back to England. Undoubtedly, individual Anglo-Americans traced their own heritage back to Scotland or Ireland.
13. Robert Tomes, 'Your Humble Servant', *Harper's Monthly* 29 (June 1864), p. 55.
14. 'She', *Scribner's Monthly* 3 (November 1871), p. 117.
15. As Ann Laura Stoler has argued, 'Racial thinking was not subsequent to the bourgeois order but constitutive of it', in Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 144.
16. On the paradox of power vested in sentimentality and the domestic sphere, see Shirley Samuels, 'Introduction', in Shirley Samuels (ed.), *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4.
17. 'Letters from the Fireside. That Old Question again', *New York Observer*, 16 November 1865.
18. Amy Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity', *American Literature* 70 (1998), pp. 581–606, here p. 582.
19. David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness* (New York and London: Verso, 1991), pp. 47–8.
20. Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 133–56. Bronwen Walter, one of the few historians to examine the relationship of Irish women to whiteness, notes that 'what was labelled the "servant problem" by employers could also be interpreted as evidence of Irish women's resistance to the identities and social positions constructed for them'. Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 64.
21. Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1881), p. 29. Although Spofford's book was published in 1881, the essays compiled for it first appeared in *Harper's Bazar* between 1873 and 1875.
22. *The Era*, 22 October 1871. On the stage Irishman, see George Chester Duggan, *The Stage Irishman: A History of the Irish Play and Stage Characters from the Earliest Times, etc.* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1937).
23. Sally E. Foster, 'Irish Wrong: Samuel Lover and the Stage-Irishman', *Eire-Ireland* 13 (1978), pp. 34–44, here p. 41. As Foster points out, Lover considered himself to be an Irish nationalist, and was often accused by the British press – despite the caricatures he presented of the Irish – as being too sympathetic to Irish autonomy and self-governance.
24. 'Recollections of an Irish Home', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 162, September 1897, p. 578.
25. E. D. Cumming, 'Domestic Helps and Hindrances', *Chambers's Journal* 3 (December 1899), p. 17.
26. The Honorable Mrs Edward Lyttelton, 'Humours of Irish Servants', *Nineteenth Century and After* 72 (November 1912), p. 798.
27. 'The Tichborne Case', *Derby Mercury*, 4 June 1873.
28. 'Varieties', *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 17 April 1872. As was often the case, this particular joke was reprinted in a number of different English newspapers.
29. 'Varieties – Grooming the Goldfish', *Derby Mercury*, 18 June 1890.
30. J. Leighton, [untitled cartoon], *Punch*, 5 November 1902, p. 102.

31. Lynn Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 93. Bronwen Walter estimates that in 1881, Irish servants accounted for only 2.7 per cent of the domestic servants employed in England, and 3.4 per cent of the total number in London. Bronwen Walter, 'Strangers on the Inside: Irish Women Servants in England, 1881', in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds), *Irish Identities in Victorian Britain* (special issue of *Immigrants & Minorities*, forthcoming 2009).
32. Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, p. 95; Stephen Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880–1939* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), p. 25.
33. L. Perry Curtis, Jr, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (1971; rev. edn, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), pp. 29–57.
34. Cartoons in the early 1880s in *Punch*, for example, would depict Irish tenant farmers who chose to ignore the politics of the Land League as normal-looking humans.
35. On the complicated politics of the Land League, see Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858–1882* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978). It should also be noted that a major strategic goal of militant Land Leaguers was to make Ireland ungovernable. This further fuelled British public discourse on the chaos that befell Ireland when left to the devices of the Irish. For a discussion of this, see Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798–1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 201–66.
36. John Tenniel, 'Two Forces', *Punch*, 29 October 1881, p. 199.
37. John Tenniel, 'The Rivals', *Punch*, 13 August 1881, p. 67.
38. John Tenniel, 'The Fenian Pest', *Punch*, 3 March 1866, p. 122.
39. John Tenniel, 'The Fenian Guy Fawkes', *Punch*, 28 December 1867, p. 263.
40. C. L. Innes, *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880–1935* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 15.
41. See De Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, p. 257.
42. 'A Message of Peace', *Punch*, 12 November 1881, p. 226.
43. James Anthony Froude, 'Romanism and the Irish Race', *North American Review* 129 (1879), pp. 519–36, here p. 523.
44. E. L. Godkin, *Reflections and Comments, 1865–1895* (New York: Scribner's, 1895), p. 58. This essay was originally published in 1873 in Godkin's *Nation*, under the title 'The Morals and Manners of the Kitchen'.
45. 'Our Irish Girls', *Arthur's Illustrated Home Magazine* 43 (November 1875), p. 668.
46. Frederick Opper, 'Our Self-Made "Cooks" – from Paupers to Potentates', *Puck*, 30 January 1884, back cover. For an overview of the different depictions and forms *Puck* used in portraying Irish domestic servants, see Maureen Murphy, 'Bridget and Biddy: Images of the Irish Servant Girl in *Puck* Cartoons, 1880–1890', in Charles Fanning (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), pp. 152–75.
47. Even though, in regard to Biddy, the historian Dale Knobel has commented that 'the undifferentiating quality of the [Irish] image rendered even gender distinctions irrelevant'. As he puts it, "'Bridget" was only Paddy with skirts'. Dale Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), p. 16.
48. Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*, p. 42.
49. 'Servants', *New York Times*, 20 September 1874.
50. 'Family Scenes of the Bible', *The Happy Home and Parlor Magazine* 8 (1 December 1858), p. 364.
51. Cited in Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, p. 70.
52. 'Glassware and Glass-Houses', p. 260.
53. Tomes, 'Your Humble Servant', p. 56.
54. Tomes, 'Your Humble Servant', p. 57.
55. 'The Princess Biddy; or "Help" and "Self-help"', *Putnam's Magazine* 14 (August 1869), p. 247.
56. Patience Price, 'The Revolt in the Kitchen', *Godey's Lady Book* 76 (February 1868), pp. 143–4.
57. Maureen Murphy counts in *Puck* fifty-nine cartoons of Irish women by the cartoonist Opper alone. As Murphy notes, their 'features become more simian when Opper's point becomes more bitter'. Murphy, 'Bridget and Biddy', p. 154.
58. Frederick Opper, 'The Irish Declaration of Independence', *Puck*, 9 May 1883, cover.
59. 'Cartoons and Comments', *Puck*, 9 May 1883, p. 146.
60. Frederick Opper, 'The Goose That Lays the Golden Eggs', *Puck*, 22 August 1883, cover.
61. Frederick Opper, 'Another Blind for the Biddies – The Dynamiters' New Device', *Puck*, 11 March 1885, back cover.

62. See e.g., 'The United States', *Times*, 27 September 1867; 'News', *Times*, 30 September 1867; 'The United States', *Times*, 9 June 1870; 'American Opinion and Home Rule', *Times*, 11 October 1887; 'The Irish Parties: Mr. Parnell's Manifesto to the Irish Americans', *Times*, 14 March 1891.
63. Although American authors occasionally discussed domestic service in Ireland, Scotland or Wales, England was far and away the most frequent point of reference. 'Hints for Judicious-Few-Dom on Hotel Life and Domestic Happiness', *Home Journal*, 26 April 1856.
64. 'Modern Domestic Service', *Godey's Lady Book* 65 (August 1862), p. 197.
65. Albert Rhodes, 'The English at Home', *Galaxy* 13, June 1872, pp. 773, 778.
66. 'The Social Question of the Day – Servants and Mistresses', *New York Times*, 13 December 1863.
67. R. Lewin, 'English Servants', *Appleton's Journal* 8 (30 November 1872), p. 606.
68. As Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock note, the British government took an active role in encouraging the settlement and development of Canada by creating programmes designed to promote the emigration of single women. Ideally, female immigrants to Canada were expected to provide domestic labour and then eventually become wives managing their own homes. Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 43–57.
69. 'English Servants in America', *Old and New* 1 (June 1870), pp. 840–41.
70. American authors' impressions of the harmony that purportedly existed between British masters and their servants ignored the fact that the 'servant question' was a feature of British life as well. On the servant question in Britain, see Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1975), pp. 120–45.
71. 'Housekeeping, English and American', *Every Saturday* 7 (23 January 1869), p. 108.
72. 'Bridget', p. 706. Dale Knobel argues that, while nativists in the 1840s and 1850s tended to see the Irish as permanently unassimilable, after the Civil War American commentators were more likely to argue that the negative qualities of the Irish could be reformed through good governance and assimilation. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic*, pp. 34–8.
73. Godkin, 'Waiters and Waitresses', *Nation*, 10 December 1874, p. 379.
74. 'The Domestic Servant', *Liverpool Mercury*, 31 December 1888.
75. Hugh Quigley, *The Cross and the Shamrock, or, How to Defend the Faith: An Irish-American Catholic Tale of Real Life* (Boston: P. Donahoe, 1853), pp. 3, 128.
76. John Francis Maguire, *The Irish in America* (1868; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1969), pp. 334–5.
77. Mary Sadlier, *Bessy Conway; or, the Irish Girl in America* (New York: D. & J. Sadlier, 1861), pp. 3–4.
78. Mary Frances Cusack, *Advice to Irish Girls in America, by the Nun of Kenmare* (New York: McGee, 1872), p. 26.
79. This particular quote comes from George Deshon, *Guide for Catholic Young Women* (1868; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1978), p. 156.
80. [Mother Mary Teresa] Austin Carroll, *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, vol. 3 (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1889), p. 177. As Maureen Fitzgerald notes, Hanna Flynn was probably an archetype as opposed to an actual individual, used to describe a common experience among the Irish immigrant women who had come through the House of Mercy. Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, pp. 59–61.
81. Harriet Beecher Stowe, 'Ireland's Daughters in their New Homes', *Donahoe's Magazine* 1 (January 1879), p. 53.
82. Stowe, 'Ireland's Daughters', p. 40.
83. Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, pp. 94–105.
84. See e.g., Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*.
85. See e.g., John J. Appel, 'From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in *Puck*, 1876–1910', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971), pp. 365–75. One image Appel uses shows a nattily dressed Irish businessman, in human form, staring at a simianised man in rags in the mirror. Appel also argues that the death in 1894 of Joseph Keppler, the Austrian-born cartoonist and founder of *Puck*, also contributed to the magazine's shift, since Keppler allegedly relished attacking the Irish.
86. M. Alison Kibler, 'The Stage Irishwoman', *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24 (2005), pp. 5–30.
87. Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. 1–15.
88. Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in the Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 94.

89. 'Biddy Dethroned', *Putnam's Magazine* 15, January 1870, p. 117.
90. Carroll, *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, vol. 3, p. 179.
91. *New York Times*, 6 August 1870.
92. Bret Harte to *Springfield Republican*, 28 February 1867, in Gary Schonharst (ed.), *Bret Harte's California: Letters to the Springfield Republican and Christian Register, 1866–67* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), p. 114.